UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Central District of California

In the Matter of the Search of A United States Postal Service ("USPS") Priority Mail parcel bearing tracking number 9505 5147 1701 4212 1786 22, as further described in Attachment A	)	Case No.2:24-mj-04774

APPLICATION FOR A WARRANT BY TELEPHONE OR OTHER RELIABLE ELECTRONIC MEANS

I, a federal law enforcement officer or an attorney for the government, request a search warrant and state under penalty of perjury that I have reason to believe that on the following person or property *(identify the person or describe the property to be searched and give its location):*

See Attachment A

located in the Central District of California, there is now concealed *(identify the person or describe the property to be seized)*:

See Attachment B

The basis for the search under Fed. R. Crim. P. 41(c) is *(check one or more)*:

☒ evidence of a crime;

☒ contraband, fruits of crime, or other items illegally possessed;

☒ property designed for use, intended for use, or used in committing a crime;

☐ a person to be arrested or a person who is unlawfully restrained.

The search is related to a violation of:

Code Section	*Offense Description*
21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1)	Distribution and possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance
21 U.S.C. §§ 846	Conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance
21 U.S.C. §§843(b)	Unlawful use of a communication facility, including the mails, to facilitate the distribution of a controlled substance

The application is based on these facts:

See attached Affidavit

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.

☐ Delayed notice of _____ days (*give exact ending date if more than 30 days*: _____) is requested under 18 U.S.C. § 3103a, the basis of which is set forth on the attached sheet.

/s/ Jolisia Bennet

Applicant's signature

Jolisia Bennet, Special Agent, USPIS

Printed name and title

Attested to by the applicant in accordance with the requirements of Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1 by telephone.

Date: _____

Judge's signature

City and state: Los Angeles, CA

Hon. Jacqueline Chooljian, United States Magistrate Judge

Printed name and title

AUSA: Thomas Magana. x1344

ATTACHMENT A

PROPERTY TO BE SEARCHED

A United States Postal Service ("USPS") Priority Mail parcel bearing tracking number 9505 5147 1701 4212 1786 22 (the "SUBJECT PARCEL"), currently in the custody of the United States Postal Inspection Service ("USPIS") in Los Angeles, California. The SUBJECT PARCEL weighs approximately 31 pounds, 1.6 ounces, bears a return address of "khiet Nguyen 8961 Tracy Ave, Garden Grove, CA 92841," and bears a recipient address of "David Yosh 1011 15th Ave, Honolulu, HI 96816."

ATTACHMENT B

ITEMS TO BE SEIZED

The following items are to be seized from the parcel described in Attachment A, which constitute evidence, fruits, and instrumentalities of violations of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1) (distribution and possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance), 846(conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance), and 843(b) (unlawful use of a communication facility, including the mails, to facilitate the distribution of a controlled substance):

a. Any controlled substances;

b. Currency, money orders, bank checks, or similar monetary instruments in quantities over $1,000; and

c. Packaging material.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Jolisia Bennett, being duly sworn, declare and state as follows:

I. PURPOSE OF AFFIDAVIT

1. This affidavit is made in support of a search warrant for the following:

a. A United States Postal Service ("USPS") Priority Mail parcel bearing tracking number 9505 5147 1701 4212 1786 22 (the "SUBJECT PARCEL"). The SUBJECT PARCEL was shipped through USPS and is currently in the possession of the United States Postal Inspection Service ("USPIS") Office, located at 1055 North Vignes Street, Los Angeles, California, within the Central District of California, as described more fully in Attachment A.

2. The requested search warrant seeks authorization to seize evidence, fruits, and instrumentalities of violations of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1) (distribution and possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance), 846 (conspiracy to distribute or possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance), and 843(b) (unlawful use of a communication facility, including the mails, to facilitate the distribution of a controlled substance) (the "SUBJECT OFFENSES"), as described more fully in Attachment B.

3. Attachments A and B are incorporated by reference.

4. The facts set forth in this affidavit are based on my personal observations, my training and experience, and information obtained from various law enforcement personnel and witnesses. This affidavit is intended to show merely that there

is sufficient probable cause for the requested warrant and does not purport to set forth all my knowledge of or investigation into this matter. Unless specifically noted otherwise, all conversations and statements described in this affidavit are provided in substance and in part only.

II. TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

5. I am a Postal Inspector with USPIS and have been so employed since August 2021. I have completed a sixteen-week basic training course in Potomac, Maryland, which included training in the investigation of drug trafficking via the United States Mail. I am currently assigned to the USPIS Los Angeles Division, Contraband Interdiction and Investigations ("CI2") team. The CI2 team is responsible for investigating narcotics trafficked through the United States Mail.

6. The USPIS is the primary investigative arm of the USPS and is charged under Title 18, United States Code, 3061 with the enforcement of laws governing the use and movement of the United States Mail, including the misuse and fraudulent schemes involving the mail, crimes relating to mail fraud, narcotics trafficking and identity theft involving the United States Mail.

7. Through training, experience, and discussion with fellow United States Postal Inspectors, I am familiar with various methods of smuggling and trafficking narcotics and other controlled substances and the proceeds from sale of such substances.

III. SUMMARY OF PROBABLE CAUSE

8. On or about August 1, 2024, Inspectors flagged the SUBJECT PARCEL at the Garden Grove Post Office because it met certain characteristics common to packages containing contraband. Specifically, the SUBJECT PARCEL had a handwritten recipient label, and the names of the sender and/or recipient did not appear associated with the listed addresses upon my review of law enforcement databases. USPIS therefore diverted the SUBJECT PARCEL from its destination of Honolulu, Hawaii to the USPIS Alameda Domicile, located at 1055 N. Vignes Street in Los Angeles, California.

9. On August 6, 2024, a South Gate Police Department ("SGPD") trained drug-detection dog, "Otis," examined the exterior of the SUBJECT PARCEL and alerted to the presence of either controlled substances or an item that had recently been contaminated with the odor of a controlled substance. Accordingly, based on my training and experience, I believe that the SUBJECT PARCEL contains controlled substances or the proceeds from the trafficking of controlled substances.

IV. STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE

10. Based on my training and experience, my conversations with other Postal Inspectors who specialize in drug investigations, my review of law enforcement reports, and my own participation in this investigation, I know the following:

A. Background on Use of Mails for Drug Trafficking

11. Los Angeles is a significant source area for controlled substances. Controlled substances are frequently

transported from the Los Angeles area via the United States Mail, and the proceeds from the sale of controlled substances are frequently returned to Los Angeles area via the United States Mail. These proceeds are generally in the form of money orders, bank checks, or similar monetary instruments in amounts over $1,000. Based on my training and experience, I know that proceeds from the sale of controlled substances often contain the odor of controlled substances because they have been contaminated with or associated with the odor of one or more controlled substances.

12. Drug traffickers often use one of two USPS services: Priority Mail Express, which is the USPS overnight/next day delivery mail product, or Priority Mail Service, which is the USPS two-to-three-day delivery mail product. Drug traffickers use the Priority Mail Express delivery service because of its speed, reliability, and the ability to track the parcel's progress to the intended delivery point. Drug traffickers use the Priority Mail delivery service because it allows drug traffickers more time for travel between states if they decide to follow a shipment to its destination for distribution. Also, by adding delivery confirmation to a Priority Mail parcel, drug traffickers have the ability to track the parcel's progress to the intended delivery point, as if the parcel had been mailed using the Priority Mail Express Service.

13. Based on my training and experience, and the collective experiences that my fellow Postal Inspectors who specialize in drug investigations have related to me, I know

that the following indicia suggest that a parcel may contain drugs or drug trafficking proceeds:

a. The parcel is contained in a box, flat cardboard mailer, or Tyvek envelope;

b. The parcel bears a handwritten label, whether USPS Express Mail or Priority Mail;

c. The handwritten label on the parcel does not contain a business account number;

d. All the seams of the parcel are taped or glued shut;

e. The parcel emits a particular odor of a cleaning agent or adhesive or spray foam that can be detected by a human; and

f. Multiple parcels are mailed by the same individual, on the same day, from different locations.

14. Parcels exhibiting some of these characteristics are often the subject of further investigation, which may include verification of the addressee and return addresses, and examination by a trained drug detection dog.

15. I know from my experience and training that drug traffickers often use fictitious or incomplete names and/or addresses in an effort to conceal their identities from law enforcement officers investigating these types of cases. Indeed, it is my experience that to the extent real addresses are ever used, it is only to lend an appearance of legitimacy to the parcel, and is almost always paired with a false name.

B. Initial Investigation of the SUBJECT PARCEL

16. On or about August 1, 2024, USPIS conducted a parcel profiling operation at the USPS facilities in the greater Los Angeles area. The Parcel profiling operation was designed to locate suspicious parcels being processed at USPS facilities. During the parcel profiling operation, USPIS identified the SUBJECT PARCEL in the mail stream after it was shipped from the Garden Grove Post Office with a destination of Honolulu, Hawaii. The SUBJECT PARCEL was identified as meeting some of the initial suspicious characteristics described above. Specifically, I determined the following: [1]

a. The SUBJECT PARCEL is a USPS Priority Mail parcel bearing tracking number 9505 5147 1701 4212 1786 22. The SUBJECT PARCEL has a handwritten label. According to law enforcement database records, the return address listed on the SUBJECT PARCEL is "8961 Tracy Ave, Garden Grove, CA 92841" and appears to be a legitimate address, but is not associated with the listed sender, "khiet Nguyen." Based on law enforcement database records, the recipient address listed on the SUBJECT PARCEL is "1011 15th Ave, Honolulu, HI 96816" and appears to be a legitimate address, but is not associated with the listed recipient, "David Yosh."

17. At the time the SUBJECT PARCEL was flagged as suspicious, it was already in transit to Honolulu. Postal Inspector Lee Versoza therefore alerted Postal Inspector Melanie

[1] Spelling and capitalization are reproduced herein as on the SUBJECT PARCEL.

Ramirez in Honolulu to re-direct the package back to Los Angeles for further inspection. Inspector Ramirez intercepted the package at the USPS Honolulu Processing Distribution Center and re-directed it to the USPIS Alameda Domicile located on 1055 N. Vignes Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

C. Drug-Detection Dog Alerts to the SUBJECT PARCEL

18. On August 6, 2024, SGPD Detective Tony Mendez and his trained narcotics-detection dog, "Otis," examined the exterior of the SUBJECT PARCEL at the USPIS Alameda Domicile. I learned from Detective Mendez that Otis gave a positive alert to the SUBJECT PARCEL, indicating the presence of controlled substances or other items, such as the proceeds of controlled substances, which emitted the odor of controlled substances, in the SUBJECT PARCEL.

19. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 1** and incorporated by reference is a true and correct copy of an affidavit from Detective Mendez. In this affidavit, Detective Mendez describes his training and experience with drug-detection dogs. He also affirms that Otis is a certified drug-detection dog.

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V. CONCLUSION

20. For the reasons above, there is probable cause to believe that the items listed in Attachment B, which constitute the evidence, fruits, and instrumentalities of the SUBJECT OFFENSES, will be found in the SUBJECT PARCELS, as described in Attachment A.

Attested to by the applicant in accordance with the requirements of Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1 by telephone on this ____ day of August 2024.

_____
HONORABLE JACQUELINE CHOOLJIAN
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Exhibit 1

AFFIDAVIT

I, Antonio Mendez, being duly sworn, declare and state as follows:

I have been a Police Officer with the City of South Gate Police Department since May of 1997. I am currently assigned as a detective to the Narcotic and Special Problems Unit with my K-9 partner Otis. I have handled and/or assisted federal and state narcotics task forces with hundreds of controlled substance investigations. I have attended approximately 200+ hours of narcotic and investigative related classes; in addition to being a member in good standing with the California's Narcotic Officers Association.

In September 2020, Otis and I successfully completed an 80-hour formal training course conducted under the direction of Rodney Spicer of Gold Coast K9. Mr. Spicer has over 30 years of experience in handling and training narcotics detection canines and is a certified K9 evaluator under POST (Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training). Otis' training certified him to alert to the presence of cocaine, methamphetamine, Fentanyl and heroin. I also conduct ongoing training on a monthly basis in various locations of interdiction, such as vehicles, truck tractor and trailers, schools, parcels, airports, storage units, residences, jails, motels, and apartments, as well as in various quantities of drugs. This training also includes controlled negative (blank) testing, in which all objects or locations have no contraband present and training with neutralizing odors which are common items associated with controlled substances, such as plastic bags, plastic gloves, and food. Otis was last certified on December 14, 2023.

As of January 2024, Otis and I have completed over 400 hours of training. I am familiar and knowledgeable about the

changes in Otis's behaviors when he detects the presence of the odor of illegal controlled substances.

On Tuesday August 6, 2024 at approximately 11:15 AM, Otis and I responded to a request for narcotic detection K-9 at 1055 N. Vignes Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Otis alerted to the presence of scent of narcotics on or in the following outbound Parcels

1. 9505 5147 1701 4212 1786 22

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed at 11:30 AM on the 6th day of August 2024 in Los Angeles County.

Antonio Mendez, Detective